

Man arrested for suspected unlicensed moneylending, money laundering; over \$700k seized

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SINGAPORE – More than \$700,000 has been seized from a man for his suspected involvement in unlicensed moneylending and money laundering activities.

The 49-year-old, who is the sole proprietor of Xpress Leasing, has also been arrested and is expected to be charged on Jan 22, the police said on Jan 20.

The police said they received at least 12 reports between September and October 2020 alleging that his business entity

issued loans illegally under the pretext of buying and leasing pre-owned mobile phones.

It is also said to have sent debt collectors to deal with those falling behind in loan repayments.

The Straits Times first reported about the [scheme in October 2020 when two maids shared about the arrangement](#).

A representative for Xpress Leasing confirmed the buy-and-leaseback scheme at the time, but said the company had “decided to stop offering it to foreigners since the beginning of this month (October 2020), as many of them do not understand how it works”.

Explaining how the scheme worked, he added that if the company bought a mobile phone from a maid for \$1,000, only \$760 would be paid to her because \$240 would be treated as rental for the device for the first month. The rental subsequently would be \$50 a month.

The maid also had the option of getting her phone back by buying it for \$1,000, which could be paid in instalments over four months.

Police investigations revealed that between June and October 2020, the 49-year-old man allegedly carried on a moneylending business without a licence by issuing illegal loans on the premises of his company.

During the course of investigations, five bank accounts connected to his alleged criminal activities were frozen and more than \$700,000 was seized.

The man, who was previously convicted of unlicensed moneylending offences, will be charged in court with one count of carrying on a moneylending business without licence.

He will also be liable for enhanced punishment under the same offence and three counts of acquiring property that represents the benefits from criminal conduct.

Those found guilty of carrying on a moneylending business without licence will be jailed for up to four years, fined between \$30,000 and \$300,000, and receive up to six strokes of the cane on the first conviction.

In the case of a second conviction, they can be jailed for up to seven years, fined between \$30,000 and \$300,000, and receive up to 12 strokes of the cane.

Those convicted of acquiring properties that represent their benefits from criminal conduct can be jailed for up to 10 years and fined up to \$500,000.

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